

## Habitat Cards

Mats of floating sphagnum cover the water's surface and block out the sunlight. Layers of dead plant material, called peat, line the bottom. A small insect struggles for its life, stuck in the sticky hairs of a sundew plant. Pine trees grow along the edges of this area. New Jersey farmers grow blueberries and cranberries in this habitat.



The warm sun shines on the water's surface, providing energy where water lilies float, while many other plants crowd along the water's edge. Frogs sit on the lilies, watching for dragonflies and mosquitoes. A muskrat looks for food among the tall cattails and reeds. He must hide or a harrier hawk may swoop down and grab him with its talons.



The many thick roots of these trees “prop” them up and allow the trees to “breathe”. Snails, crabs, snakes, and worms live and crawl among the maze of roots. In this warm place, the air is humid and salty. Many fish come in from the open sea to lay their eggs in this protected area. But there are hazards here too- a patient red egret or a quick black cormorant is ready to eat any fish that come too close to the surface.



Animals seek shelter behind the tall reeds and *Spartina* grasses that stretch to the horizon. Water birds like the Great Egret, with their long necks, search the water's muddy bottom for a meal. Ducks paddle around the area with their webbed feet and feed on the water plants. They will not find any frogs here, though. They will have to dine on small crabs or fish instead.



## Habitat Cards

The sound of frogs calling and the hoot of an owl are heard, but the water is dark and still. Small plants float around the wide buttresses holding the huge cypress trees upright in the mud. Small islands are home to raccoons, deer, and the many birds that prey on fish, reptiles, and amphibians living in and around the water.



Fine particles of dirt make mud when they settle out of the water. Where the water is shallow, the muddy bottom is uncovered at low tide. While this area may not look like home to many animals, and few or no plants grow here, lots of creatures live down in the mud. Watch for hungry shore birds searching for them in the mud.

